

infotech by annette lamb and larry johnson

Caldecott connections, part 1: illustrations, illustrators, and technology

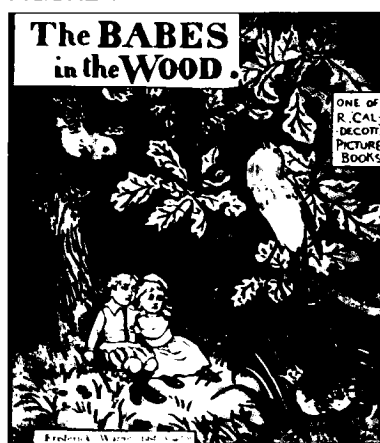
Brian Selznick rocked the library world by winning the Caldecott Medal, which is given each year by the American Library Association. Named for the nineteenth-century English illustrator Randolph Caldecott, the award most often goes to a children's picture book.

In 2008, Selznick won for *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, a graphic novel mystery for the intermediate level reader that is set in Paris during the 1930s. Also winning a Caldecott Honor was Peter Sis with his graphic memoir titled *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* that should be popular with high school teachers. Hopefully these controversial choices will renew

interest in exploring seventy years of wonderfully illustrated books for young people of all ages.

Let's explore the practical activities to connect young people with illustrations and illustrators.

FIGURE 1



Cover of *The Babes in the Woods* by Randolph Caldecott

- What tools were used to create the images (i.e., photographs, collage, oil, watercolor, die cut)?
- Do the illustrations communicate information or ideas effectively?
- How do the images make you feel? What emotions do they convey?
- Do the illustrations reflect the real world or a fantasy world?
- How well do the illustrations match the text?
- Do you like or dislike the illustrations? Why? Give examples.

START WITH ART

Fly Like an Illustrator. *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold is a picture book based on a 1988 Tar Beach Story Quilt at the Guggenheim Museum www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_work_md_137_1.html. The pictures are acrylic on canvas with fabric borders containing text. In the story Cassie imagines she can fly.

Ask students where they would like to fly. What would they like to see? Use Google Earth earth.google.com to go on a virtual adventure. Start by flying over Harlem to identify the landmarks from the book *Tar Beach*. In some cases, you can view photographs of the area. Fly over your hometown. Then, explore the world. Use Google Earth as inspiration for creating illustrations and stories.

FIGURE 2



Google Earth exploration of Harlem

Art as a Starter. Explore the Museum of Modern Art project called Destination Modern Art moma.org/destination/.

Examine the way famous paintings by Pollock and Degas are expressed in the Caldecott book *Olivia* by Ian Falconer. Try the Dancers and Degas interactive www.metmuseum.org/explore/dancers/index.html. Create art like Jackson Pollock at www.jacksonpollock.org/. Write your own story featuring your favorite works of art. Also consider including artwork that you think is silly or confusing.

Explore artwork online using websites such as the Virtual Arts Portal at Wikipedia en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Visual_arts, Art History: Resources on the Web witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHLinks.html and Artcyclopedia www.artcyclopedia.com/.

Pacific Northwest Indian Art. Examine the art in Caldecott books such as *Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest* by Gerald McDermott. Then, explore the art of the Pacific Northwest Indians from the Digital Collections at the University of Washington content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw/index.html. Do you see the similarity? What are the basic characteristics of this type of art? Notice the use of geometric figures and bright colors. You don't need to use special graphics software to create a great product. Go to www.artsconnected.org/toolkit/ and explore visual elements and principles. Then use their geometric figures to create your own images and story.

PERSPECTIVE

Visual perspective is the way that objects

appear to the eye. Perspective plays an important role in the art of picture books. One aspect of perspective involves vantage point/the point of view. For instance, *The Hello, Goodbye Window* by Norton Juster and Chris Raschka is told through the perspective of a little girl through a specific window.

Perspective also involves how items are drawn. For instance, objects decrease in size as their distance from the observer increases. Known for books like *The Polar Express* and *Jumanji*, Chris Van Allsburg's illustrations are filled with interesting perspectives. For instance, he sometimes draws from a child's eye height.

Look for Perspective. Explore Caldecott award winning books that contain interesting perspectives such as *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers*, *Sector Seven*, *Time Flies*, and *Tuesday*. Can you figure out how these perspectives were created by the illustrator?

Draw in Perspective. Examine images with interesting perspective at Wikimedia Commons commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Perspective. Use simple online tools such as FlashPaint www.flashpaint.com/ to try some of the techniques for perspective drawing.

Change the Perspective. What if a story were set in another time or place? Create your own story based on illustrations from another setting. For instance, what if Rapunzel were locked up in the top of a Redwood tree in California or the Empire State Building in New York? How would the story be different? What would it look like?

ILLUSTRATION TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

An illustration is a visual representation of something. In books, illustrators establish the setting, bring the characters to life, and tell the story in a visual way. Go to Illustration from Wikipedia en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illustration to learn more about visual representations.

Celebrate Variety. Collage, drawing, painting, photography, woodcut, and gouache are a few of the techniques used for creating illustrations for children's books. Look for these techniques in

Caldecott award winning books. Use open source graphics software such as GIMP www.gimp.org/ to explore the way filters can be used to recreate techniques such as oil, woodcut, and watercolor.

In *The Hello, Goodbye Window*, Chris Raschka uses watercolors, oil pastels, and pencil.

In *Snowflake Bentley*, Mary Azarian uses woodcut and watercolor.

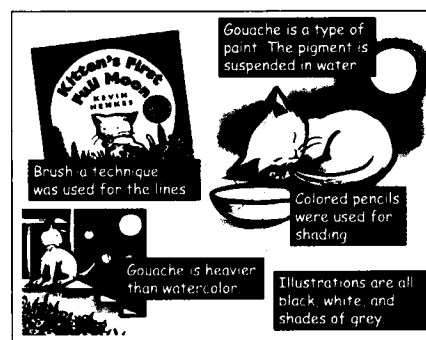
In *Casey at the Bat*, Christopher Bing uses pen and oil.

In *Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins*, Brian Selznick uses acrylic paint.

In *Kitten's First Full Moon*, Kevin Henkes uses gouache and colored pencil.

Illustrator Techniques. After exploring a variety of techniques, choose your favorite. Create a PowerPoint scrapbook of your favorite illustrator. Use call-out bubbles (sometimes referred to as speech balloons) to describe the techniques used in creating the illustrations and to provide background information about the illustrator.

FIGURE 3



Kitten's First Full Moon student project

Oil Painting Exploration. Caldecott books including *Goggles*, *Man Who Walked Between the Towers*, *Time Flies*, *Swamp Angel*, *Stinky Cheese Man*, *Polar Express*, and *Rapunzel* use oil painting. Compare the illustrations in these books to famous paintings. How does the *Stinky Cheese Man* compare to the Mona Lisa en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Mona_Lisa.jpeg? You'll be surprised at the similarities. Try the Still Life interactive www.nga.gov/kids/zone/stilllife.htm at the National Gallery of Art to create your own painting like the old masters.

Watercolor Comparison. Compare the way watercolor is used in books such as

Grandfather's Journey, *The Amazing Bone*, *The Big Snow*, *Free Fall*, *Madeline*, *The Little House*, *Mirette on High Wire*, *Officer Buckle and Gloria*, *Noah's Ark*, *On Market Street*, *Owen*, *The Red Book*, *Swimmy*, *The Stray Dog*, *The Three Pigs*, *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type*, *Sector 7*, *So You Want to be President?*, *Stone Soup*, *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*, *Tops & Bottoms*, and *Tuesday*. Which techniques do you like best? Try recreating this technique using the BRUSHster tool www.nga.gov/kids/zone/brushster.htm or Flow www.nga.gov/kids/zone/flow.htm from the National Gallery of Art.

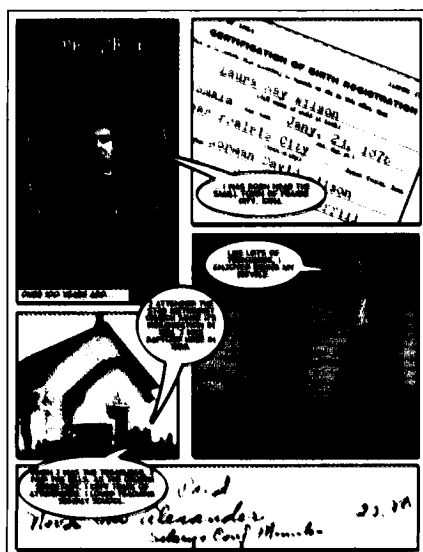
Computer Collage. Explore the way collage is used in books such as *Alexander and the Wind Up Mouse*, *Frederick*, *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?*, *Golem*, *Smoky Night*, *Handmade Paper*, *Seven Blind Mice*, *Color Zoo*, and *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*. Create your own collage using Remix: An Interactive Collage redstudio.moma.org/interactives/remix/ from the Museum of Modern Art website or at the National Gallery of Art www.nga.gov/kids/zone/collagemachine.htm.

Experiments in Black and White. Why do you think an illustrator would choose to use black and white illustrations rather than color? Explore *The Spider and the Fly* illustrated by Tony DiTerlizzi and *Kitten's First Full Moon* by Kevin Henkes. Use graphics software to turn a color image into black and white or grayscale. What's the impact? Use the Fauxtogram tool redstudio.moma.org/interactives/fauxtogram/ from the Museum of Modern Art to create cool grayscale images.

Graphic Novels and Memoirs. Graphic novels and memoirs are popular approaches to writing. Use tools such as Comic Life plasq.com/comiclife/ to create your own comic or graphic novel. For instance, *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* can serve as the inspiration for your own graphic memoir. Or, create an illustrated biography based on the life of a family member. Incorporate real primary source documents, photographs, and other materials.

Hidden in Plain Sight. Everyone loves to solve a visual mystery. Try Scholastic's I Spy project www.scholastic.com/ispy/. Now, explore the Speaking of Pictures project at the Smithsonian American Art

FIGURE 4



A biography of Laura Wilson using Comic Life software

Museum. Young people can explore clues that reveal a story behind well-known paintings such as

- Elizabeth Winthrop Chanler americanart.si.edu/collections/interact/speaking_pics/sp_chanler.cfm
- The Headless Horseman Pursuing Ichabod Crane americanart.si.edu/collections/interact/speaking_pics/sp_quidor.cfm
- Interior with Portraits americanart.si.edu/collections/interact/speaking_pics/sp_leclear.cfm
- My Children americanart.si.edu/collections/interact/speaking_pics/sp_thayer.cfm
- Orion in December americanart.si.edu/collections/interact/speaking_pics/sp_burchfield.cfm

Some illustrators like to provide details about people and places through small messages on their page. These may be posters in the background, writing on books in the illustrations, or specific references to people or places. It's fun to find the connections. For instance in the book *Tuesday* by David Wiesner, look for the clues that tell the time of day. In the book *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat* by Simms Taback, can you figure out the location and people in the story? The book *Harlem* refers to many historical and cultural references. How many can you find? Create a PowerPoint slide

containing a page from one of these books. Create audio clues on the slide.

FOCUS ON ILLUSTRATORS

While many young people are familiar with children's book authors, they're often unaware of the people behind the illustrations.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Young people can learn more about award winning illustrators through examining online audio and video interviews and events.

Reading Rockets. The Reading Rockets project www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews is funded by television and a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Watch illustrators talk about themselves and their work.

Bookfest. The Library of Congress sponsors the National Book Festival. Many of the events are available through their Book Fest Webcast videos at www.loc.gov/bookfest/.

Meet the Writers. Watch video and listen to audio interviews at Barnes and Noble Meet the Writers www.barnesandnoble.com/writers/ including Ian Falconer illustrator of *Olivia* and Chris Van Allsburg illustrator of *Jumanji* and *The Polar Express*.

National Public Radio. Listen to National Public Radio audio programs www.npr.org/ related to Caldecott illustrators.

Do a YouTube youtube.com, Google Videos video.google.com, or TeacherTube teachertube.com search for your illustrator to see if an interview is available.

Fictional Interviews. Create your own video or audio program based on a Caldecott illustrator using the following ideas:

- Create a slide show of favorite images by the illustrator and create voice over using Microsoft PhotoStory 3.
- Nominate a particular image by an illustrator for the "best of Caldecotts" award. Create a nomination speech to go with the still image using the open source audio recorder and editor Audacity audacity.sourceforge.net.

- Create a PowerPoint scrapbook of your favorite illustrator. Create narration to describe the techniques used in creating the illustrations and background information about the illustrator.

FIND THE CONNECTIONS

The world of children's illustrators is remarkably small. Seek out the connections.

All in the Family. Many authors and illustrators enjoy working with family members. For instance, the Pinkneys are an entire family of children's authors and illustrators. Leo and Diane Dillon, as well as Arnold and Anita Lobel are husband and wife teams. Can you find other connections among authors and illustrators? Use the concept mapping software Inspiration to create a "Famous Creative Families" class project that shows these relationships. What traits do you share with your family members? Create a concept map showing the relationships among your family members. What do you have in common with your father, mother, siblings, and extended family?

Illustrators in School. Chris Van Allsburg, the Caldecott winner for *The Polar Express*, was a faculty member at Rhode Island School of Design where David Wiesner went to school. Compare the illustrations. Can you see any of the same techniques? Which ones? Other alumni include Steven Kellogg and David Macaulay. David Wiesner was a student of Van Allsburg. Compare the illustrations. Can you see any of the same techniques? Which ones?

Illustrator Web sites. One of the best ways to get to know an illustrator is to explore their web site or blog. Many illustrators have publisher web sites and fan web sites, so be sure to look for the official web site that's supported by the illustrator. Evaluate illustrator web sites. Which do you think is best? Why? If you were an illustrator, what would you put on your web site?

Use the BioCube www.readwrite-think.org/materials/bio_cube/ from ReadWriteThink to organize information about an illustrator.

- Mary Azarian illustrator of *Snowflake Bentley* www.maryazarian.com/
- Tomie dePaulo illustrator of *Strega Nona* www.tomie.com/
- Tony DiTerlizzi illustrator of *The Spider and the Fly* www.diterlizzi.com/
- Ed Emberley illustrator of *Drummer Huff* www.edemberley.com/
- Denise Fleming illustrator of *In the Small, Small Pond* www.denisefleming.com/
- Kein Henkes illustrator of *Kitten's First Full Moon* www.kevinhenkes.com/
- Susan Jeffers illustrator of *Three Jovial Huntsmen* www.susanjeffers-art.com/
- Ezra Jack Keats illustrator of *The Snowy Day* www.ezra-jack-keats.org/
- Gerald McDermott illustrator of *Raven* www.geraldmcdermott.com/
- Peggy Rathmann illustrator of *Officer Buckle and Gloria* www.peggyrathmann.com/
- Peter Sis illustrator of *Tibet, Starry Messenger, and The Wall* www.petersis.com/
- William Steig illustrator of *The Amazing Bone* www.williamsteig.com/
- Janet Stevens illustrator of *Tops & Bottoms* www.janetstevens.com/
- David Wiesner illustrator of *Tuesday, The Three Pigs, Flotsam*. Sector 7 www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/authors/wiesner/

Illustrator Blog. Some illustrators like to share what they're doing with their fans using a blog. How is a blog like and unlike a regular web site? Explore illustrator blogs:

- Lane Smith, illustrator of *Stinky Cheese Man* www.lanesmithbooks.com/
- Mo Willems, illustrator of *Knuffle Bunny Too* mowillemsdoodles.blogspot.com/

ILLUSTRATOR STYLES, TIPS, AND TRICKS

While some illustrators jump right into creating illustrations, others use sketches, photographs, and even models to help visualize the setting and characters.

Models. David Wiesner uses visual sketches and models before creating his illustrations. Build a model and use it for inspiration for a drawing and a story. Explore the creative process David Wiesner uses to create his illustrations at www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/authors/wiesner/process/process.shtml. Read about how Janet Stevens uses props in creating her illustrations at www.janetstevens.com/studio/mousehose/contact.html.

Characters. Illustrators look at the world around them for characters. Read *Models* www.theinventionofhugocabret.com/about_hugo_models.htm to see how Brian Selznick found the characters for *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. Invent your own characters. Who will be the inspiration for your drawings?

Style. Each illustrator has a unique style. Examine *Stinky Cheese Man*. Lane Smith has a very unique artistic style. You can find examples at his website

www.lanesmithbooks.com/. Try replicating his style. What are some of the features of this style? What makes his work unique? What is your style? Write a critique like those you've found in book reviews that describes your techniques, approaches, and style.

Growth of an Illustrator. How does the work of an illustrator evolve over time? Select an illustrator. Gather books by that illustrator. How has the illustrator's technique changed over time? What do you like and dislike about these changes?

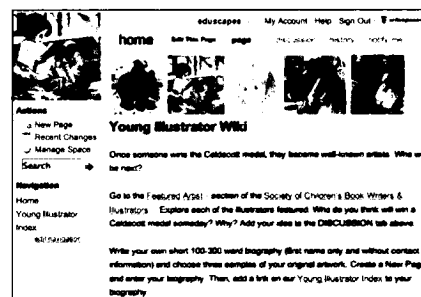
Many authors such as Marc Simont have had long careers that include other work such as creating political cartoons www.simontcartoons.com/.

Who Will Be Next? Once someone wins the Caldecott Medal, he or she becomes well known. Who will be next? Go to the Featured Artist section www.scbwi.org/feat_artist/previous.htm of the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators. Explore each of the illustrators featured. Who do you think will win a Caldecott Medal someday? Why?

Find a recent picture book that hasn't won a major award such as *The Three Snow Bears* by Jan Brett. Using these criteria, nominate this book for an illustration award. Now create a nomination scrapbook that incorporates information about the illustrations and how they were created. Use the slide area of PowerPoint for your visuals such as favorite pages from the book. Use the speaker note area to write the text of your nomination speech. Then, record your voice reading your speech.

Place your project on at the Young Illustrators Wiki at illustrators.wiki

FIGURE 3



The Young Illustrator Wiki

spaces.com/.

Learn more at Caldecott Connections <http://eduscapes.com/caldecott>.

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Drs. Annette Lamb and Larry Johnson both teach in Indianapolis' School of Library and Information Science at Indiana University as part of the Teacher of School Library Media Leadership Online Blue Ribbon Certification program available to educators around the world (<http://eduscapes.com/blueribbon/>). Visit <http://annettelamb.com/> for more exciting teaching ideas.

